

C. Remarks

The claims are 1-10 and 12-16, with claims 1-3, 8-10, 12, 13 and 16 being independent. Claim 11 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1-10, 12, 13 and 16 have been amended to clarify the invention. The amendments are fully supported by the application as filed; accordingly, no new matter has been added. Reconsideration of the present claims is respectfully requested.

Claims 13-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 because the claimed invention is allegedly directed to non-statutory subject matter. In response, Applicants have amended each of claims 13 and 16 to replace “storage medium” with --computer-readable medium--. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Examiner’s §101 concern has been addressed and respectfully request withdrawal of the §101 rejection.

Claims 1-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Nou (U.S. Patent No. 6,932,452). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

The invention (as presently defined in independent claims 1, 2, 8, 10 and 12) has at least two characteristic elements. First, specification information (e.g., patterns shown in Figs. 6 and 18) is selected and assigned to a pixel; the specification information specifies one or more scans used to print one or more dots having a single size on the pixel on the basis of a density level of the pixel. Second, when the density level of the pixel is higher than a predetermined density level, the specification information specifying a combination of the scans used to print the dots is selected. By virtue of these features, when the specification information is assigned to the pixel, each of one or more dots to be printed to form a pixel is determined to be recorded in a particular number of scans.

Therefore, a mask pattern conventionally used in multi-pass printing becomes unnecessary.

Moreover, when the density of the pixel exceeds the predetermined level, the specification information specifying a combination of the scans used to print the dots is selected. As a result, deterioration of a pixel caused by multi-pass printing lessens because multiple dots having single size are recorded in a pixel in different scans. Independent claims 3 and 9, while addressing configurations slightly different from that note above, are directed to methods which have substantially the same features as those noted above.

By contrast, Nou discloses an ink-jet printer providing a function that the number of dots corresponding to a density level of a pixel are recorded in the pixel, as shown in Figures 9-12 and column 6, line 57 to column 7, line 10. The recorded dots have the same size. According to that disclosure, the printer (or print data) disclosed in Nou may have a function for designating the number of dots to be recorded. However, Nou fails to disclose a function for specifying the scan(s) by which a dot (or dots) are recorded. In other words, Nou fails to disclose at least the first feature of the claimed invention described above.

In addition, as shown in Figure 9, the printer of Nou prints multiple dots arranged in a scanning direction for a pixel by a single scan. A pixel is not recorded by multiple scans but a single scan. Thus, it is impossible that a combination of scans could be specified for recording a pixel. In this way, Nou fails to disclose at least the second feature of the claimed invention described above.

For these reasons, Applicants submit that Nou does not anticipate the present invention. Simply put, Nou fails to disclose or suggest at least two key features of

the present claims, namely the selection and assignment of specification information to a pixel and the specification of a combination of scans to print dots when the density level of the pixel is higher than a predetermined density level. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the §102 rejection.

This Amendment After Final Rejection is believed clearly to place this application in condition for allowance. Its consideration is therefore believed proper under 37 C.F.R. §1.116. Accordingly, consideration of this Amendment After Final Rejection, as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution, is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner believe that issues remain outstanding, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney in an effort to resolve such issues and advance the case to issue.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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